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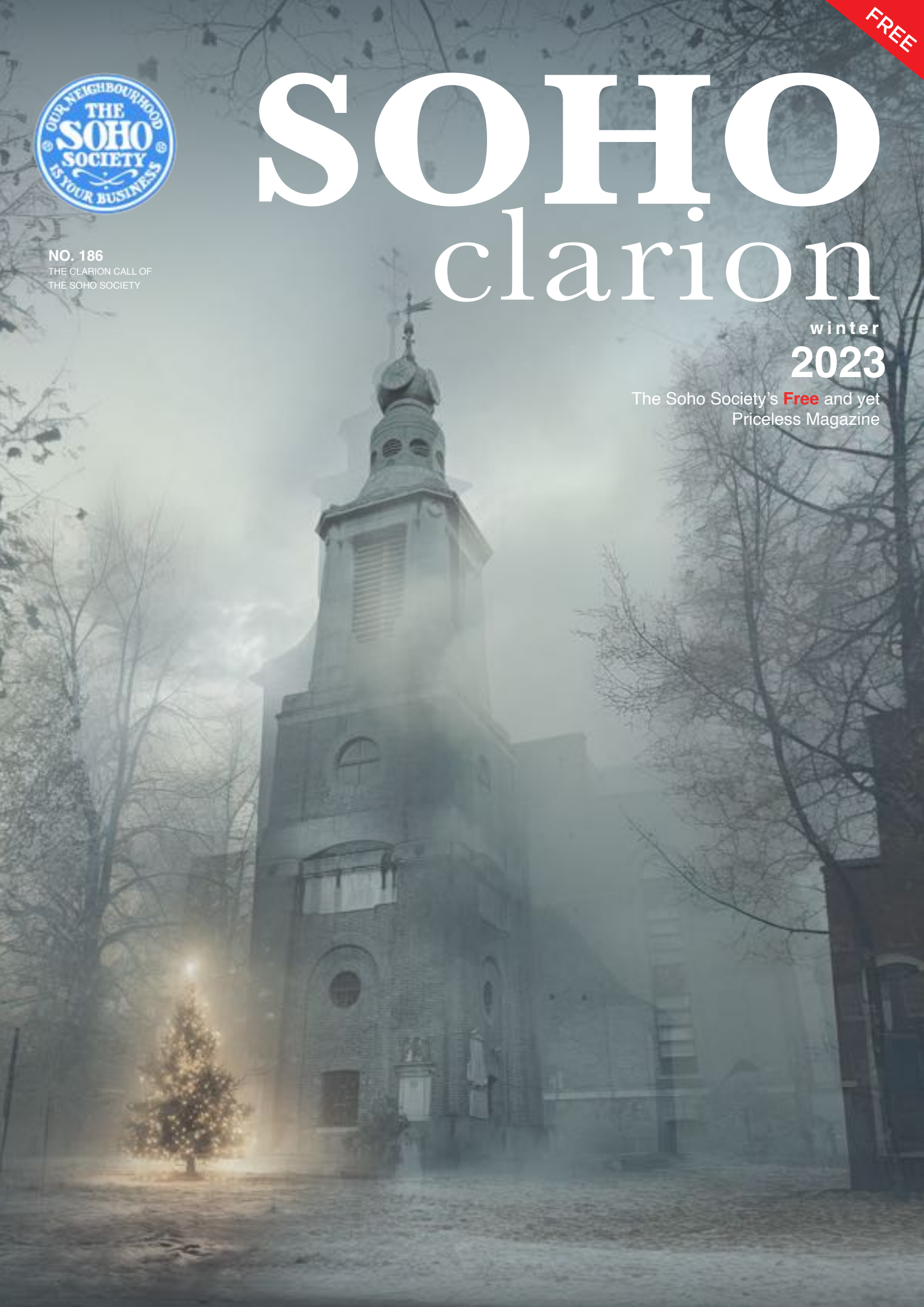
SOHO clarion

NO. 186

THE CLARION CALL OF
THE SOHO SOCIETY

winter
2023

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EDITOR Jane Doyle

FROM THE TOWER



As fuss and misery fill the world news at the moment at this time of Christmas this editorial will focus on exclusively good news from Soho which remains the best of places to live, love, work and visit.

First of all we can all celebrate that Tesco, Dean Street, will not now be closing in Spring 2024 as would have been the case had permission for redevelopment of the site had been granted by the council's major applications sub-committee in October. It is good to see that planning policies are now being followed and properly applied. The setting of the important Grade2* French Protestant Church on the North West corner of the square will remain and Soho Square will retain its relatively tranquil atmosphere rather than becoming a thoroughfare for pedestrians between Dean Street and Tottenham Court Road. Special thanks to Cllrs Paul Fisher, Ruth Bush, Nafsika Butler-Thalassis, Jason Williams, Robert Rigby and Jim Glen for their careful and thoughtful deliberation and questions..

Second, Soho is as busy as it has ever been with some lovely new openings in Soho such as Oisin Rogers' fantastic Devonshire Pub in Denman Street, a fabulously glamorous new hotel on the corner of Berwick and Broadwick Street featuring food from Soho's very own Jamie Poulton, and, my own favourite, Malin + Goetz in Berwick Street with lovely smelly things from New York. Vasco and Piero's Pavilion continues to do well in its new home on D'Arblay Street, Gelupo on Archer Street has had an upgrade and we still have our much loved Algerian Coffee Stores, I Camisa & Son (thanks to the generosity of Shaftesbury Capco), and the always perfect Maison Bertaux and the French House, which remains the most atmospheric pub in London. No other London village has the range, heritage and choice of lovely shops, bars and restaurants and we should never forget that. It's especially welcome at Christmas.

Third, while the exec committee may be slightly concerned by the crime figures in the West End, our local police are getting extra help many nights of the week from the irrepressible Territorial Support Group. We welcome their contribution and thank our wonderful local police officers (especially Mark, Andy and Matt) for looking after us with such good humour. Thanks must also go to our council city inspector team, Oxana, Laura and Chelsea who have taken on the considerable task of looking after Soho - filling Mary's large boots. who has now moved on to the greener pastures of St James' but also has our thanks for putting up with us for so long.

Fourth, while dockless bikes are being parked somewhat carelessly in Soho's crowded narrow streets they are at least a useful extra way of getting about. Thankfully, the Council is very much on the case with the indomitable Councillors Patrick Lilley and Paul Dimoldenberg very effectively bothering Lime and its associates who are, however reluctantly, starting to tidy things up.

Fifth, the much loved Soho Theatre in Dean Street is doing so well it has "podded" and will soon offer its inimitable shows and stand up comics in the Granada venue in Walthamstow in addition to Soho which remains as before - the new venue is only a short ride on the Victoria Line, I am told. So many things start in Soho and go on to have London wide, national or indeed global success. We wish them well.

Sixth, we will have in January 2024 a community cafe at 54 Dean Street (name to be revealed in due course) as a result of the hard work of Father Simon and his assistant Jake. BBC documentary footage exists of the old community centre at 60-62 Broadwick Street (the Charles Norton Centre) which residents will remember closed in 1992, to set an example for the new venue - lots of communal singing around the piano and tea and cake. This new cafe will become a really important place for the community for sharing information, networking and catching up on the gossip as well as having a delicious cup of coffee from Jake's very precisely selected espresso machine.

Seventh, our wonderful new theatre @Soho Place is open and showing wonderful new, creative, diverse and inclusive shows which we can all be proud of. Thank you Nica Burns for all you have done for Soho and for theatre in London. Which other village has got a new theatre of national status you ask? - exactly, only in Soho.

Eighth, the Colony has re-opened but, sadly, in Mayfair not Dean Street. It's opened as a six month 'pop-up'. I understand it's not that far away in Heddon Street. You can't have everything. The Academy, Gerry's and Trisha's remain open and, conveniently, in Soho.

Finally, the Soho Society's Christmas Party is on 20 December in the Community Hall from 7.30 and all members of the Society in good standing are invited but please do sign up on this link so we know how many are coming. Members of the executive committee will be there pouring drinks and offering nibbles and Christmas good cheer. We will be celebrating Soho at Christmas which is always a joy. Merry Christmas to you all.

soho-society-christmas-2023.eventbrite.co.uk

PLANNING



We're watching...

A FAIRER WESTMINSTER?

There have been several signs recently that councillors are more prepared to listen to the concerns of residents on planning issues. The decision to refuse permission to develop the Tesco site in Dean Street/Soho Square would have been unthinkable under any recent Conservative administration, and indeed the two Conservatives on the planning sub-committee voted in favour of allowing it. Interestingly, in the case of extended hours of use for licensed premises at the Sky Bar, due to open in the Trocadero, and the Broadwick Hotel, one Conservative voted with two Labour councillors to refuse both applications while one Labour councillor voted to approve them. Perhaps democracy is breaking free of its chains!

The full implications of these decisions have yet to be understood. Later hours were rejected following a representation by Tim Lord on behalf of the Soho Society. In the past councillors have seemed to believe that Soho is so noisy that more late night noise wouldn't make much difference. With these decisions, councillors accepted his submission and refused the applications because later hours 'would result in unacceptable noise and disturbance for local residents'. We hope that this more realistic assessment of the impact of the late night alcohol-based economy will continue.

The decision taken on the Tesco site did not, in planning terms, directly come about because of the potential loss of an important local amenity. There are no planning policies which would protect the supermarket use, sadly. Councillors based their decision on the design of the proposed building and its impact within the Soho Conservation Area. However, they also took into account the proposed 'public benefits', which the Soho Society argued were overstated and did not take account of the public dis-benefit of losing Soho's only large low-cost supermarket.



The final outcome is not settled as it is possible that the developer will appeal against Westminster's decision. Meanwhile, we believe there are lessons to be learned. In particular, there needs to be better engagement between council officers and the local community and we hope to encourage Westminster to move forward on this. The Planning Group is due to meet Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development together with planning officers early in December.

If 'Fairer Westminster' is to become a reality in the West End another key issue is accessibility. In the absence of national legislation, the council is struggling to control the poor management of the influx of hire e-bikes, with Lime the most prolific offender. But there are plenty of other pavement obstructions for the less mobile to contend with. Tables and chairs outside hospitality venues can be a problem. These can be a welcome addition to Soho streets, but only where they do not impede pedestrians. In most cases, Westminster requires pavement space of at least two metres for pedestrians but some businesses do not take their responsibilities seriously. Council officers will take enforcement action if a problem is reported to them.

Recently, for example, this led to The Ivy Brasserie having to move some of their tables and chairs in Broadwick Street.

Finally, it was encouraging to see residents take the lead in objecting to planning applications in Meard Street and at St James Residences. People often do not realise that for objections to be sustained by the council they do need to have a good justification in planning policies. (That's why, although it is common sense that Tesco should remain in Dean Street, the council could not refuse planning permission on that basis.) By carefully basing their objections on specific planning issues, Meard Street and St James residents were successful in getting Westminster to refuse the applications concerned. If you have a concern about an application, the Soho Society is always willing to support you where we can.

Andrew Murray



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TALKING TOILETS

Where to ‘go’ when out and about in Soho?

It’s a question as old as “Time please, gentlemen!” and a mystery as impenetrable as the long-since-shuttered facilities on Broadwick Street, pictured here in happier times with another much-missed ‘John’.

In fact, a word-search of Clarion back issues reveals that the subject has been driving residents, workers and visitors alike round the S-bend for decades. As someone who has worked in and around Soho for 30 years myself – and thus now approaching an age where such matters are increasingly front-of-mind – I am pleased to report, however, that relief is (almost) at hand.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Soho Neighbourhood Forum, and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding from Westminster City Council, work is finally underway to investigate the need for, and feasibility of additional public toilet facilities in Soho. After publishing the Soho Comes Clean report on waste management last August, and answering a request for proposals in March, the consortium of research and data analytics consultancy Orbitl and urban planning and sustainability agency Crystal Associates was engaged in September to deliver the project.

Working on the principle that you cannot manage what you do not measure, our team has embarked upon an extensive programme of research to both quantify and qualify the nature of the problem.

Having dived into the subject matter, much like Ewan MacGregor’s character Renton in *Trainspotting*, at the time of writing we have conducted over 20 in-depth interviews with a diverse array of stakeholders and experts. To date, these have included toilet designers and manufacturers, ward councillors, landlords and place makers, Council officers, residents’ and business associations, community

leaders, neighbouring Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and charities representing the interests of vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, disabled, and people suffering from medical conditions that make ‘toilet mapping’ a daily preoccupation.

Earlier this month (November) we conducted four focus groups for Soho residents and business owner/operators, and in the coming weeks we will be rolling out two quantitative surveys, for businesses and visitors to the area. After analysing the results of these, combined with footfall

and spending data, on-the-ground surveying, and best-practice case studies from across the UK and around the world, we hope to demonstrate once and for all the value that public toilets bring to our streets and communities, and to identify suitable designs and locations in keeping with the Soho context.

To ensure that our recommendations

reflect the diverse views and experiences of all Soho’s stakeholders, it is essential that as many voices as possible can be heard. So, if you are a resident, business owner/operator, or a regular visitor to Soho and would like to have your two penn’orth (50 pee in today’s money), please sign up to participate via the following link:

s.alchemer.eu/s3/9112baa46d0f

Or by scanning the QR code at the bottom of this page.

We look forward to hearing from you, at your convenience.

Alastair Harris



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LICENSING

The Soho Society Licensing Committee meets every month to discuss the applications to Westminster Council for new or extended alcohol licences that have been made that month. In addition, when an objection has been submitted, members of the group attend licensing hearings at City Hall to endorse our reasons for objecting, and support any residents who have put in an objection.

Many of the applications will concern changes to, for example, the layout of the premises, to which we would not object, unless this is to increase the capacity of the premises. This we would likely object to as it would add to cumulative impact, i.e. the number of potentially inebriated people in surrounding streets. The Council is currently reviewing its Cumulative Impact Policy and there will be an article about this in the next Clarion.

It is clear that Councillors pay particular attention to objections from individual residents who have taken the time to write in and explain why an application would affect them and their family. It carries even greater weight if residents attend the hearing at which the application is considered. However, hearings are on a Thursday morning which makes it difficult for many residents to attend.

Also supporting residents and the Soho Society is Richard Brown of Citizens Advice. Funded by, but completely independent of, the Council, he advises residents and amenity groups from all over Westminster. He can be contacted for advice on writing an objection and attends and speaks at nearly all hearings in support of residents. His knowledge, advice and support is enormously valuable and important, in particular in relation to the more technical and legal aspects of a case. His email is licensing@westminstercab.org.uk.

The Soho Society only puts in an objection when we believe that a new licence for the sale of alcohol, or an extension of hours to an existing alcohol licence, does not align with the Council's licensing objectives and will affect the lives of residents in the area through the cumulative impact of increased noise, leading to sleep deprivation, or increased crime. Unfortunately Councillors sitting on

licensing panels do not always agree with us. The Council's licensing objectives are:

- prevention of crime and disorder
- public safety
- prevention of public nuisance
- protection of children from harm

The Council states that: "The policy seeks to balance the interests of business and residents to make sure that Westminster continues to offer a wide choice of high quality and well managed entertainment and cultural venues within an environment that is safe and attractive to residents, business and visitors."

Residents often tell us that they do not know that a new alcohol licence or an extended licence has been applied for. Council notices are not always received and the required notice in the window of the premises is often not noticed, so where there are a number of residents in the vicinity the Soho Society is now trying to put leaflets through neighbouring letterboxes

informing residents that an application has been made. This has been very effective and more residents are now responding to applications. This has had a positive affect on outcomes. So if you do become aware of an application which you think may negatively affect you, do consider sending in an objection.

It is worth noting that premises often have a good reputation for controlling the behaviour of their customers on their premises, and the problem is often the concern about potential noise and anti-social behaviour that occurs in neighbouring streets when they leave the premises. This is addressed in the cumulative impact policy and Councillors are beginning to take notice of this aspect in applications for new and extended alcohol licences.

If you would like to join the Soho Society's licensing group to discuss an application that affects you, or if you would like to join the group regularly, do get in touch through admin@thesohosociety.org.uk

The Licensing Committee



WARD PANEL UPDATE

AND OTHER NEWS

Since the last Clarion (the summer), the ward boundaries have changed and the police do not just cover Soho but the whole of the West End Ward (as per the council boundaries) - to include Fitzrovia, Oxford Street and parts of Mayfair, so a much larger area. It's not as easy to understand the crime stats, but it looks as though they are slightly down from their previous peak, though they are still very high. The vast majority of crime in Soho takes place in the area covering Wardour Street to Charing Cross Road (which is where the majority of late night licences are), with gangs focusing on those coming out of venues who may be vulnerable.

However, the police currently have the TSG working in the area. As most of our readers will know, this is a unit which specialises in public order policing. TSG units patrol in marked carriers, the carriers normally consisting of an advanced driver, seven constables and a sergeant. They patrol designated areas experiencing serious levels of gang violence or disorder. They have had considerable success in targeting this type of crime in Soho.

However, there is still a lot of what is considered less serious crime, the majority of which is opportunistic - phones, handbags, laptops, etc. So don't leave your valuables unattended and keep your eyes open.

I recently caught up with PC Andy de Santis, one of our dedicated ward officers, who's updated me on their work in Soho, he says, "... we have tried to focus on many issues that you have told us about, but many are not straightforward. It's great to hear that nitrous oxide is now recognised as an illegal drug." He also says that issues around drug misuse have been tackled through local patrols and at night, and one approach to robberies is through Community Protection Warnings, which have made a dent into crime which has decreased.

"There have also been issues with ASB from unregulated magazine sellers ... which led to individuals being given CPWs to stop them selling magazines illegally." Likewise there have been issues with bikes and motorcycles and

operations have been planned to tackle this, and the police have "had some arrests and seizures of bikes which have seen the number of 'problematic' cycle workers reduced locally."



Andy says that there "has been a lot of turn around and surprises this year ... engaging with businesses and along with feedback from the local community we have come up with some solutions for ongoing issues." He also pays tribute to MPS Specials "who have helped in the area on local patrols in tackling some of the issues giving a visible presence."

Andy's message is, "There is immense pride in serving a community that is so vibrant, passionate and diverse and explaining some of our policing powers and procedures in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour." He also hopes that 2024 will be "a little less challenging and keep us all together - working for a safer Soho for all."



The Night Stars work on Friday nights helping those who may need it - people may have lost contact with friends, had phones stolen, and so on. The Night Stars, who used to be known as the Soho Angels, do great work, you can recognise them by their high-viz pink vests. As the WCC website says: "Night Stars are a team of volunteers there to help you. Whether you need water, directions, slippers or someone to talk to, our



Photo: Tunde Valiszka

team of volunteers will be there for you in your time of need to ensure you get home safely." They are part of WCC Night Safety Campaign and more details can be found on the WCC website.

Following a restructuring at Westminster City Council, we have lost our Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, Mary O'Connor, to St James's Ward. We thank her for all her help, hard work and patience over the years she has been in Soho, and we wish her well. We have a new Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, Chelsea Coleman, and we look forward to working with her.

Soho has some new hospitality venues. The new luxury hotel, Broadwick Soho, opened on 15 November. It's

been a long time in the making. We wish them well, and apparently the elephants on the front of the building are only for Christmas (unlike dogs and cats). The elephants are like marmite, you either love them or loathe them. I'm in the former camp! See elsewhere in the magazine for more on the hotel.

There is a new pub / restaurant, the Devonshire, on Denman Street, which has recently opened to great reviews, we wish them well - there is more elsewhere in the Clarion. A speciality is Guinness, so if you're a fan, the Toucan has competition.

We also have a Prosecco café at 26 Frith Street, next door to Little Ku. Some of us from the Society went along and tasted the Prosecco and also the charcuterie, which was delicious. They do pasta and more, and lots of delicious looking pastries, so we wish them all the best. The staff are all very friendly, and will guide you through the menu, and so on. There is also a downstairs seating area.

The Xmas Lights for kids were turned on on 14 November. This event is now in its third year, and the children at Soho Parish design their lights, having carried out research of "... local buildings, communities, cultures and traditions - exploring the role light plays in each of these elements, and how we create feelings of identity and a sense of place from the areas we inhabit." You can see where all the lights are by visiting <https://citylions.org/soho-kids-xmas-lights-2023/>, which will give you a map of where all the lights are to go on a walking tour, and it also has pictures

of some of the lights. There are 48 this year. Each year they're stored and then added to next year. It's a great initiative and cheers up the nights of Soho from November through to January. Other merchandise is also available through the school - wrapping paper, cards, and so on.

The singer, Collette Cooper, has a monthly residency at The Groucho. "Collette will bring special evenings of entertainment to The Mary Lou Room on the first floor of The Groucho Club every month from 7.30pm, where her unique vocal style, distinguished musical taste, warm sense of humour and sharp wit will keep the audience laughing and always wanting more. As part of this brand new series of events, she will perform exclusive sets with some of the world's greatest jazz, jazz/rock, blues and soul musicians in this sophisticated and intimate setting. Collette's monthly events in The Mary Lou Room are open to all members of the Groucho Club and each member can bring up to four non-member guests per show. Spaces to see each show can be booked via club reception."

Collette has just released "The House of the Rising Sun" as a single, and there is also a Christmas Album. "The Darkside of Christmas".

Collette will also be a guest on the Soho Society Hour in the not too distant future, and we will keep you up to date with performances from her and other artists and events in Soho in our monthly newsletter.

Jane Doyle



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THE COLONY ROOM

It's Back!

Sadly closed since 2008, The Colony Room Club, Soho's infamous louche and legendary watering hole, is back ... for a limited engagement. Artist and author of 'Tales from the Colony Room', Darren Coffield, has done an excellent job of re-creating the Club in the basement of the (David Bowie themed) Ziggy Green restaurant at 4 Heddon Street, W1. Behind the green door is a nether world of green gloss paint, low level lighting and almost every square inch of wall space adorned with a huge array of original and reinterpreted art works, and ephemera amassed by Coffield. He describes the project as 'A love letter to London's lost bohemia' - an art installation that you can drink in!

Sadly you won't be able to rub shoulders with Francis Bacon and Lucien Freud any more, but at the grand opening on 15 November many old Colony Room regulars

were in evidence. They gave Coffield's interpretation the thumbs up, and let me tell you, they are a tough crowd to please! Local musician Clifford Slapper was on piano leading a sing song and bar prices have, for now, been pegged at 2008 levels - £4 for a Beefeater and tonic. While not claiming to be an exact copy of the infamous drinking den, it certainly captures the spirit of the original. Planned to be open for six months, if visiting, I recommend a peek behind the door to the left of the bar.

A longer article and interview with Darren Coffield is planned for the next issue.

Clive Jennings



Darren Coffield in his Colony Room art installation and immersive bar

THE SOHO SOCIETY HOUR

The Soho Society Hour has now been broadcasting live every week, on Soho Radio, for nearly ten years, including through Covid lockdowns, ever since Adrian Meehan and his colleagues started up Soho Radio in 2014. The Soho Society warmly welcomed and supported Soho Radio and they have continued to support us ever since. We are enormously grateful.

The Soho Society Hour currently goes out every Thursday from 8.00am to 9.00am, broadcasting from Soho Radio in Broadwick Street. For those who find it difficult to listen in at this time, the programmes are uploaded to the Soho Society website, where they serve as an interesting social history of our times.

JP Levack who had been our lead presenter for three years left to give more time to his many other interests and we now have a team of local people who present, read the local news, and lead the conversations with guests. We are really grateful to JP for turning out every week at such an early hour and being a great host. JP will be doing a Christmas special programme on 21 December and we hope he will come back to host a programme from time to time.

Our team of hosts are Tim Lord, Chair of the Soho Society, Jane Doyle, Editor of the Clarion, Lucy Haine, Chair of the Soho Neighbourhood Forum, and David Gleeson, member of the Soho Society Executive. All are Soho residents. Simon Buckley, Rector of St. Anne's, and Cat O'Shea, who works in Soho, also co-host from time to time. And of course we have Jim Cooke's Art Review which we look forward to every week, when he suggests some of the shows and plays we might like to see in Soho and beyond.



There's only space to give a flavour of some of the guests who have been on the show since the last edition of Clarion. A highlight is always the children from Soho Parish School. This year was no different and we had Soho's Mini Mayor and Deputy Mini Mayor on in July; and some of the children who created the designs for the Children's Christmas lights

in October. Young people were also represented by Kaylan Cavallo and Toulouse MacDonnell, who made a thirty minute film when they were in year 6 at Soho Parish called "Our Soho". Musicians included Annie Lydford, organist at St. Anne's and CEO of the Academy of St. Martin's in the Field, Neil Drinkwater and Bob Morgan talking about their new albums. Artists have included Stuart

Semple; authors, Arkedi de Rakoff; film makers Colin Vaines and Angela Fealy; businesses, Peter Morris of Soho Voices and Joao Rocha of Storm Flowers. Hospitality businesses included Oisin Rogers (the Devonshire) and Jo Ringestad and Jamie Poulton (The Broadwick Hotel). And mention must be given to Karen Proctor, Chair of UCG (United Cabbies Group) who spoke eloquently about the difficulties that the single lane system in Regent Street causes them and other vehicles.

To listen to the conversations of these and many more, do go to the Soho Society website. And in the New Year and beyond we will have lots more interesting guests talking about Soho. Set your alarm and listen in.

Wendy Hardcastle

BROADWICK SOHO

Many years ago, and certainly prior to the pandemic, planning permission was given by Westminster City Council to demolish a chunk of Broadwick Street, on the corner of Berwick Street, and build a hotel. We've watched its progress with curiosity and, following many delays and setbacks, it's now complete and Soho has a brand new independent luxury hotel with 57 rooms.

The original idea was conceived by a group of friends, who are "committed to providing impeccable service and creating memorable experiences for every guest". The property's owner, Noel Hayden, spent his childhood years living at his family's hotel, Mon Ami, in Bournemouth, owned and managed by his mother Jackie and his father Noel Snr, a magician and true showman, which closed its doors in 1988. Broadwick Soho is "a love letter from Noel to his family and is the culmination of a long-held personal dream to open his own luxury hotel in Central London ... inspired by the magic and nostalgia from Mon Ami, combined with the history and vibrancy of Soho." There are references to his family throughout - his mother, Jackie, inspired the name of the restaurant Dear Jackie.

Joining Noel in bringing Broadwick Soho to life are Jo Ringestad, Joshua Gardner, Andrea Gelardin and Jamie Poulton. Managing Director Jo Ringestad and Executive Director Joshua Gardner bring expertise in hospitality to ensure the smooth running of the hotel. Creative Director Andrea Gelardin "infuses the property with a vibrant and captivating lifestyle appeal", whilst Jamie Poulton, Non-Executive Director (and co-owner of Soho restaurant Randall & Aubin), provides valuable Soho knowledge and insight.

Each of Broadwick Soho's 57 rooms features "bespoke furniture and individually selected artworks, with high-quality finishes throughout. Rich patterns and vibrant prints are complemented by a soft and soothing colour scheme with different materials, textures and styles. Custom-designed beds, sumptuous bedlinens and bespoke amenities add an extra dash of opulence to each room". Large windows allow a lot of natural light. I was shown around and it was like being in another world, the only noise I could hear was a low hum of the 'mini bar'. To be aware of the hustle and bustle and noise of Soho, you have to look out of the window! The bathrooms are beautiful with marble wash-tops, walk-in "rain-showers", and some suites also feature free-standing bathtubs.

As to the food and drink offerings, Jamie took me around just before they opened and, not surprisingly, the attention to detail is astonishing - comfort, beautiful décor, lighting, seating - as you would expect. Working from bottom to top, on the lower ground floor you have "Dear Jackie" (named after Noel's mother), "a destination for Italian opulence, refined dining, and nighttime glamour.". Open for dinner, the menu reflects modern Italian gastronomy – featuring exceptional pasta dishes

and re-imagined Italian classics, as well as an extensive wine list.

Going up to the ground floor, there is Bar Jackie, Broadwick Soho's all-day street level Italian bar and terrace, "paying tribute to the legendary and flamboyant Jackies of our past, present and future". The bar serves coffee and Bomboloni (an Italian doughnut - Jamie leapt on one of these when we had coffee there), aperitivo classics such as Pinsa Romana, arancini and antipasti, as well as negronis, vermouths and homemade gelato and granita.

On the ground floor also is the Nook, a private, residents only ground floor lounge.

Moving up, there is Flute, the rooftop dining bar. In the 19th century, Broadwick Street was home to a noted flute-maker, hence the name of the bar. Flute's landscaped wraparound outdoor terrace offers wonderful views of the streets and skyline. Inside, the décor combines "cocooned comfort with maximalist glamour – animal-print upholstery, cork walls and mirrored ceilings united by an extravagant palm-frond carpet". There you will be able to get something from the "ever-changing list of innovative cocktails complemented by lunch and dinner menus featuring food designed to be enjoyed with friends". There is also a private dining room on the eighth floor, a large space seating up to 24 on one table.

There is also a mix of artworks throughout the hotel, including works by Francis Bacon, Bridget Riley, Andy Warhol, and William Turnbull, amongst others, with "emerging artists' pieces from Faye Wei Wei and Casey Moore to name but a few".

Last but by no means least, there is the hotel Mascot, the elephant. The elephant is part of Broadwick Soho's logo and is "the symbol of the hotel. Elephants are extremely loyal and intelligent animals with empathy and compassion ... and also well known for their emotional and social skills ... they are affectionate and conscientious with incredible memory and recognition. These are attributes and values that Broadwick Soho aspire to emulate as a brand and as an independent family business." Guests will find references to elephants throughout the hotel. Currently, two large elephants adorn the front of the hotel and, like Marmite, people love them or hate them - I am personally in the former camp, I think they're great. However, they are, I am told, only there for Christmas, so go and view them while you can.

Broadwick Soho has been a long time in the making, and we wish them every success.

Jane Doyle



PAUL FISHER

LABOUR WARD COUNCILLOR



It is a pleasure to provide news from your local councillors in this issue of the Clarion. A lot has happened since the last issue and there are a number of big Soho-related items of news that will be of interest to the community. There are three key points I would like to highlight in a large menu of issues affecting Soho: the new designated waste officer; the dismissal of a planning application pertinent to Dean Street/Soho Square and what the Council is doing on e-bikes.

Cllrs Lilley, Toale and I are very pleased to announce that - as requested by Soho Neighbourhood Forum and as part of the new council neighbourhoods team offering for West End - Soho will now have a dedicated council officer focused on waste. There have been historic issues with commercial and residential waste in Soho. Although we have made great strides in tackling waste in the village, this new dedicated officer will help us to tackle remaining issues and make sure that where concerns arise the Council can respond quickly and effectively.

In planning, Soho heard that an application to demolish buildings on Dean Street and Soho Square has been dismissed. At a planning committee meeting on 17 October 2023, the committee dismissed an application that would have meant demolition of buildings as part of the development of a new "Soho Bazaar". I sat on that application, considered all of the issues and made no comments or prejudgments about it. However, I decided to vote for dismissal on the night. Four out of the six members (including myself) considered that the application should be dismissed on grounds of impact on heritage and design. This was the right decision. Planning decisions are apolitical. Members of the same political party often vote differently. I have to express some disappointment, therefore, that the local Conservatives have decided to politicise the decision by arguing that majority Labour membership's votes to dismiss this application (which would have seen the current home of Tesco's on Dean Street demolished) means Westminster is closed for business. It does not. It simply means that members on the committee (who were not voting along party lines) individually felt that the application was contrary to the City Plan and that the plans were wrong for this part of



the City. I should also note that my colleagues, Cllrs Toale and Lilley (who, unlike me, did not sit on the committee and could therefore make representations) opposed the development for a number of reasons.

Finally, on dockless e-bikes: these have caused a headache for residents for a number of years but the problem has only increased as the market has grown over the past two years in particular. The Council promised to address the issue. It grabbed the bull by the horns in August 2022 by confiscating bikes that were becoming detritus on the streets of the West End. In early 2023 - in no small part due to complaints on the part of myself, Cllrs Lilley and Toale - the council successfully

lobbied Lime (one of the providers) to increase the fines on those who parked their bikes on the streets obstructively. In October 2023, it introduced an entirely new system for parking of e-bikes in designated bays across West End. Pausing here, we are aware of the teething problems associated with these bays. These are constantly under review during what is an experimental phase of the project. But I welcome the fact that the Council decided to

make acting to free-up our pavements a key pledge to local residents and have every confidence that the cabinet member with responsibility for this work, Cllr Paul Dimoldenberg, is working hard to make sure that these bays are perfected over time.

We are now over 18 months into our term as your local councillors. It remains a real privilege. In the usual way please do continue to email us any concerns you have, or come along to our surgeries on the second Saturday of the month. We will try our best to assist. If you happen to see me and my Italian Greyhound puppy, Alfie out and about in Soho, do say hi!

In the meantime, a very merry Christmas to you all from Cllrs Fisher, Toale and Lilley.

Paul Fisher

NICKIE AIKEN

CONSERVATIVE MP FOR CITIES OF LONDON & WESTMINSTER



A King's Speech delivering the way forward for our pedicabs scheme.

In November, we had the King's Speech, the first in 70 years, where the King unveiled the Government's long-term plans to address the challenges we face as a country.

As well as continued action to tackle inflation and grow the economy, the upcoming agenda will be wide-ranging with 21 Bills. Upcoming legislation will include leasehold and rental reform, and a new criminal justice bill to ensure those found guilty of a crime attend their sentencing hearing, and it puts victims front and centre of the criminal justice system.

Critically for Soho, we unlocked the way forward in our campaign for a pedicabs licensing scheme. The King announced a new law to regulate pedicabs.

It's a huge victory in our long-running campaign, made possible by your support as well as the support of The Soho Society and many other local people, amenity societies, groups, and businesses across the Two Cities. Thank you for your support.



Regular readers will know that for years, I have led the campaign for a pedicabs licensing scheme. I've heard too often appalling stories of local people having to put up with pedicab riders blaring music on the streets below their windows at all times of day and night, riders who block the pavement, or stories of visitors and tourists being charged hundreds of pounds for short journeys. This will end under our scheme.

Transport for London will administer the licensing scheme similarly to how they administer licenses for black cabs and private hire vehicles. Our licensing scheme will also require drivers and their vehicles to undertake proper checks to confirm they are safe to take passengers.

I am delighted to report that the Bill has begun its journey through Parliament with its Second Reading in the Lords on 22nd November. It will then make its way through the

Commons. I hope with the support of MPs from across all parties, we can have it up and running by the summer. I will of course keep you updated.

Equally important legislation announced in the King's Speech includes the Renters Reform Bill, giving renters more security and ending the overall ban on having pets in rented homes, whilst strengthening the rights of landlords to evict problem tenants. The much-needed Leasehold and Freehold Bill also sets out to make it easier and cheaper for property owners to extend their leases or buy their freehold.

The King's Speech laid out the Government's long-term plans to enhance animal welfare, grow the economy, keep people safe, and strengthen our society. Please read more at nickie.news/KingsSpeech23

With winter now firmly upon us, I want to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year and my best wishes for 2024!

If I can be of any help on any issue, local, national or international, please get in touch. Send me an email at nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk or write to me at Nickie Aiken MP, House of Commons, Westminster, SW1A 0AA

Keep up to date and be the first to know what I'm up to by following me on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube @TwoCitiesNickie. Sign up to my community newsletter to get the latest community news directly to your inbox at nickie.news/SignUp

Since writing the above, the Pedicab Bill has had its second reading in the House of Lords and is now at the Committee stage. Watch this space!

BEAUTIFUL SHOPS

As the High Street loses big names at an unprecedented rate, Soho's independents strive hard to maintain market share, stand out from the crowd, facing rising rents, business rates and the digital challenge head on. Retailer Lucy Haine, reviews two iconic Soho stores in a regular feature, a celebration of beautiful shops, finding perfect Christmas presents and Soho tales.

POP UP 38, 70 Old Compton St W1D 4UL

Ownership/History: Pop Up 38 started at 38 Caledonian Road, a Thai restaurant by night and florist by day. Owned by Naomi with a longtime Soho history, her children attended Soho Parish School. This is the 17th incarnation of the pop-up, which has traded on all the Bs in Soho, Broadwick, Berwick, Beak and now back to Old Compton Street. The current space was generously donated by Soho Estates - Shaftesbury Capital donated their previous location on Beak Street. The store is a

charity,
Lapis
Lazuli



all sales made go to support the school, in Kabul, Afghanistan. Opened in 2011, the school teaches 650 children from the Hazara minority, ranging in age from 5 to 18, (girls to 12 years old).

Naomi's connection with Afghanistan is fascinating. She lived there for the first 15 years of her life, arriving at 6 weeks with her parents Monika and Howard. Naomi's father, Dr Howard Harper a New Zealander, was an ophthalmic surgeon and doctor to the then King of Afghanistan. Much-loved by the

Schools,
and
100% of

Afghan people, Dr Harper was given honorary citizenship in 2011.

Store layout: A painting of Soho George hangs above the till, painted by volunteer, Lee Sullivan a Selfridges Visual Merchandiser who sadly passed away recently. The style and feel of the store is Lee, transforming skip finds into free shop-fit. The look is eclectic, rock-star walk-in wardrobe. A Jacqueline Bisset-esque mannequin in gold turban and gown, reclining on a House of Hackney, chaise longue dominates the frontage. All stock is donated, with some bought-in staples. There are some incredible Afghan pieces, including a stunning embroidered and mirrored wedding dress.

Fabulous finds include: LK Bennett heels for £25, and a stunning red velvet Beau Monde jacket £385, slashed to £100, Beau is a supporter. "Always donate your best things" says Naomi. "People are so generous. John Rocha donated all the footwear from his latest catwalk show." It arrived hot off the runway, in boxes after a chance encounter. Rails of dresses are framed by colour-pop night lights, mushrooms, rabbits, and robots, bought wholesale in the Netherlands, and oversized sunglasses. Don't miss the clutch bags created out of donated Designers Guild fabric, a snip at £25.

Meet the team: Naomi and five volunteers including close friend Natalie, to whom she bears an uncanny resemblance, Lundy, and her daughter.

Soho Best sellers: Afghan jewellery, knitted wrist warmers £15 clutch bags £25

Busiest time: Difficult to predict in Soho, it varies, lunchtimes.

Events: Pop up 38 will be taking part in the French House Market on 3 and 10 December, and RCIS Festive Circular Fashion event on 7 December 5-9.30pm.

What you like most about Soho: The people

Soho discounts: No

Did you know? The charity always raises targets to the exact pound. Naomi puts this down to faith, recounting a time they were £1000 short and a customer, a Brazilian returning home donated bags of what looked like old sheets. They were nearly overlooked and on closer inspection turned out to contain foreign currency, which once changed up came to exactly £1000!

Did I buy? Yes! a Designers Guild velvet Cushion to match a previous gift £60

Website/Socials: www.lapislazulischools.org.uk Instagram: @popup38

Trading Hours: Mon to Sat 11am - 6.30pm

GERRYS WINES AND SPIRITS, 74 Old Compton Street, W1D 4UW

Ownership/History: Founded by Michael Kyprianou and partner Gerry Cohen, the store's namesake, who left the business after a year. Gerry's is now owned by a North London Wholesaler, Venus Wines and Spirits, who bought it 15 years ago. The store opened in 1985 and still uses the same carrier bag design. Current manager, Allen Daly, joined the team from Victoria Wines (Berwick Street) in 1986. Founder Michael, a legend in the bar industry, is attributed with launching the vodka revolution, kick-starting the UK obsession with all things vodka and catapulting Absolut into the nation's conscience in the early 1990's.



Store layout: Counter service, personal recommendations accompanied by lots of banter. The store is now known for stocking the widest range of every type of alcoholic beverage, encyclopaedic knowledge, and selection of spirits. In the early days they imported European wines, stocking all the bars and restaurants across Soho and Chinatown. Their

most expensive bottle is vintage Macallan at £2500 a bottle. The layout remains unchanged since the eighties, mixers on the left, spirits on the right, an Aladdin's cave of the international and unusual.

Meet the team: Allen leads the team, often called Gerry. Founder Michael K. now long-retired still visits, and then there's Vince, Andy, Graham, Albert, and Marcus, erstwhile musicians, and a resting actor.

Soho Best sellers: Vodka!

Busiest time: Varies week on week, but busiest post-covid, on Thursdays around 6pm

Events: Tastings 4 days a week, King of Soho Gin were in situ on my visit and it is rare to visit and not be offered a glass of something. The store launched Ghostbuster Dan Aykroyd's Crystal Head Vodka this year, attracting huge crowds.

What you like most about Soho: The people. Soho has changed dramatically but that is the nature of Soho, always changing and it is big enough for everyone. Allen elaborates further, "you and I have both been here for ages and know a

lot of people but my circle is different from your circle, Soho is small but big enough for everyone." He talks wistfully of his days as a young chicken dancing all afternoon 3-6pm in Billy's on Meard street, after visiting the record stores and years hanging out with a crowd including Ruby Venezuela, and the owner of The Windmill in The Duke of Wellington



on Wardour Street, of an afternoon.

Soho discounts: No, although they still offer wholesale to bars and restaurants.

Did you know: Allen is famous in Peru, becoming a Tik Tok meme from an in-store joke on Pisco. Peruvian customers in Gerry's are always offered Chilean Pisco and Chilean customers told they should only drink Peruvian Pisco. The team were filmed by a Peruvian Tik Tok star and Allen is now famous in Lima with 2.5 million views and a loyal Peruvian following in the UK.

Did I buy? Yes! Pol Roger Champagne £47.95

Website/Socials: www.gerrys.uk.com

Instagram: [@gerryswinespirits7246](https://www.instagram.com/gerryswinespirits7246)

Trading Hours: Mon – Thurs 9am-7pm, Fri & Sat to 9pm, Sunday 12pm – 6pm

MY SOHO STOCKING

Lucy Haine asks the Society Exec to choose their favourite Christmas gifts from Soho's best independents.



Wendy
The Door of Return by Bob Morgan with Diabel Cissakho
£30, The Vinyl Factory, Poland St



Marina
Dinner for two
Vasco & Pierros Pavillion
£100, D'Arblay St



Takashi
Soul Jazz Records hoodie
£35, Sounds of the Universe
Broadwick St



Lucy
Heart & Banner Silver ring
£155, The Great Frog
Ganton Street



Joel
A night at The Broadwick Soho
£491
20 Broadwick St



Andrew
Fresh fruit from Jimmy's stall
£25, Quality Fruits
Berwick St Market



Quentin
Pipe wrench, £23
Romany's Brewer St



The Exec

Packet of raisins
for Chrirtmas baking
£1.65, Tesco, Dean Street



Jason

Ticket to Soho Place Theatre
£50, 4 Soho Place



Richard

Membership to Piano Bar Soho
£20
Carlisle Street



Tim

Cheeses from Robin's stall
£20
Soho Dairy, Berwick St



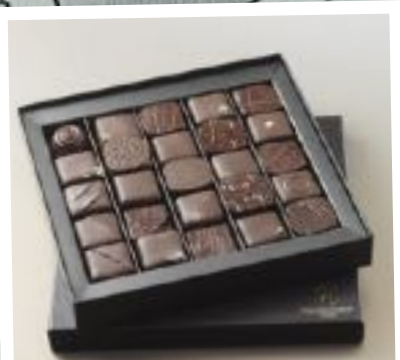
Margaret

Dinner for two voucher
L'Escargot, £100
Greek St



Nick

12 Days of Coffee Christmas
Selection Box, £29.99
Algerian Coffee Stores
Old Compton St



Jane

25 piece Chocolate Box
£42
William Curley, Smiths Court

CHRISTMAS BY THE PLAYERS

In the mid 1980s Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera had set up a recording studio at his house in Chertsey. Many great albums were recorded there by Roxy and others, and Phil was very open to new projects and generous in letting people use it. Somehow, I am not sure exactly how, Phil had come across a group of musicians led by a charismatic multi instrumentalist called Chris Turner. They were

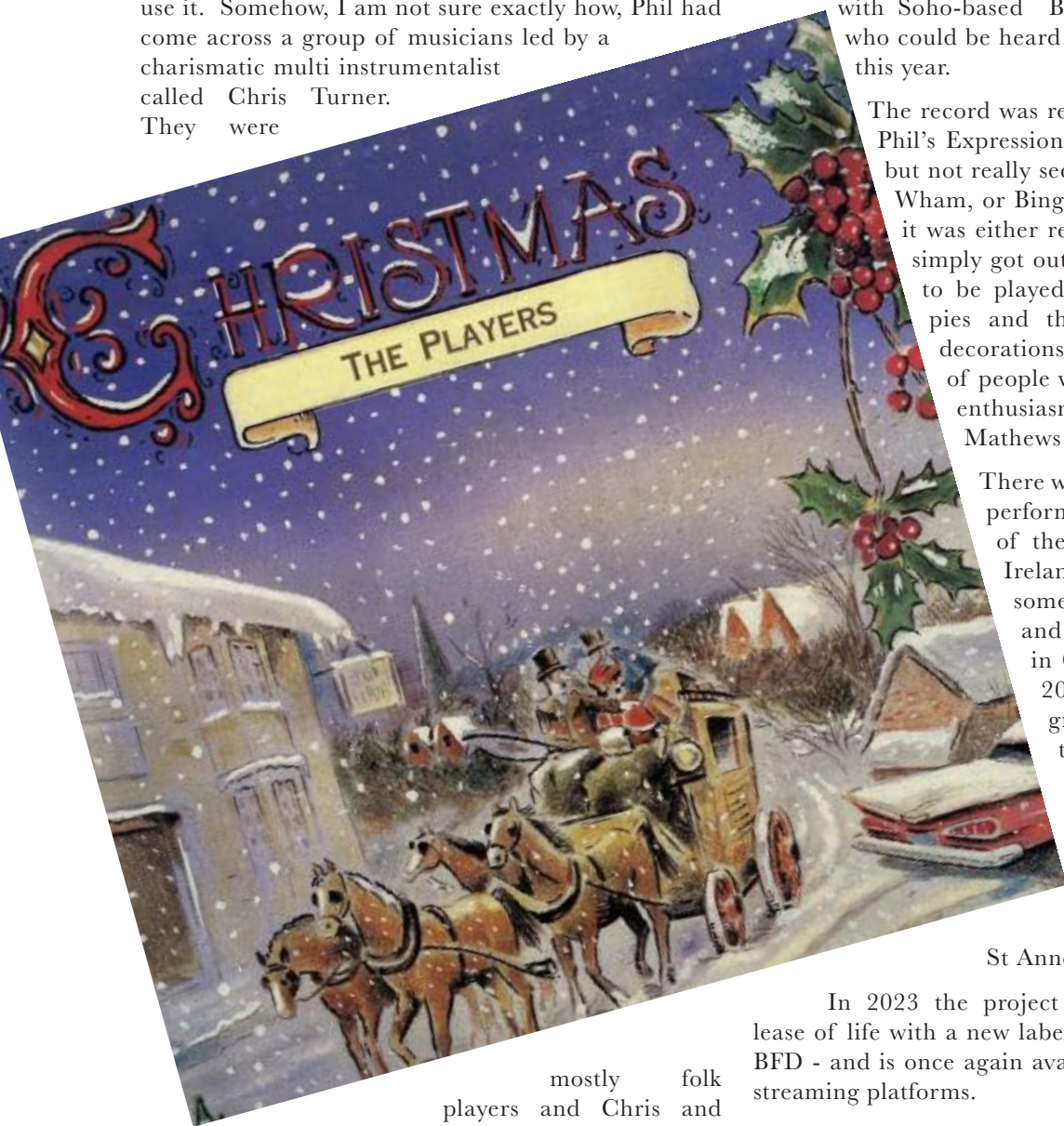
- and me - spent just a few days rehearsing and recording instrumental versions of every Christmas tune we could think of, hence the 33 tracks! It was all acoustic and pretty much live with few overdubs. I joined in on oboe, soprano sax and cor anglais along with Soho-based Bob Morgan on clarinet, who could be heard in Berwick Street earlier this year.

The record was released later that year on Phil's Expression label. It was well liked but not really seen as a threat to Slade or Wham, or Bing Crosby! Over the years it was either re-released, or more often simply got out of the record collection to be played over turkey and mince pies and then put away with the decorations. It built up a following of people who loved its unobtrusive enthusiasm, notably by Cerys Mathews at BBC radio.

There were never any official live performances although several of the Players got together in Ireland one year and played some notable sessions in pubs and bars around Kenmare in Co Kerry. In December 2017 I put together a group, including some of the originals, to play the Players arrangements of carols in Dean Street to celebrate the dedication by the Bishop of London of the new entrance to St Anne's.

In 2023 the project has been given a new lease of life with a new label distributor, expression/BFD - and is once again available on Vinyl, CD and streaming platforms.

Andy Mackay
www.christmas-theplayers.com



mostly folk players and Chris and his partner Rachel Maloney were based in America. They had recorded something called, I think, 'A New England Christmas' - instrumental versions of Christmas carols and tunes. Phil had heard this, thought it was a great idea and asked me if I would produce a record. In the summer of 1988, an assembled group of British folk musicians

BOB MORGAN

Soho resident Bob Morgan has just released a new album, "The Door of Return", a collaboration with Senegalese musician Diabel Cissakho, recorded in Dakar and Soho, and just released by Soho based record company The Vinyl Factory. For press release and video:

thevinylfactory.com/?p=213319&preview=1&_ppp=64afb692e9

I caught up with Bob recently to learn more of his history, which is long, varied and fascinating. He started composing for the theatre aged 16, and then went on to study both classical music and jazz at Leeds Conservatoire, specialising in composition, clarinet and saxophone. His theatre work became interspersed with multi-media performances and more popular styles. He has continued to write music to dramatic forms from Shakespeare to the avant-garde.

One of his first projects was at the Liverpool Playhouse, a new score for the first professional production of Brecht's Musical 'The Last days of the Commune'.

He also wrote for Tony Harts kids TV show 'Take Hart', which ran from 1977 to 1983.

Bob also recorded several music library albums in reggae influenced genres. He also formed and led 'The Angel of The Odd', an improvising orchestra of up to 20 musicians to accompany silent movies, including a performance to the 1922 vampire movie 'Nosferatu'.

Bob says he has always loved working to music with dramatic form, and reckons that's why he may have ended up working on other people's projects and not so many of his own. He has a particular interest in the way words and music interact with each other, and as I understand it there is an unfinished opera waiting in the wings. He has an interest in and studies the way words and music interact with each other, in opera or in the blues - both cathartic art forms.

In the past Bob was a Musical youth worker helping create one of the first youth centres in Uxbridge with a recording studio and record label - Tyger Label. John Peel used to play

with them. Sadly, this ended when the London Borough of Hillingdon withdrew funding, as so many boroughs did, probably a very short-sighted decision.

There has also been a collaboration with Andy Mackay on an album of Christmas Carols, released in 1996 and to be re-released this year - Christmas by the Players, a group of musicians, featuring 33 traditional carols, arranged for acoustic instruments.

A recently released album from Neil Drinkwater and the Red Stripe Band, produced during lockdown, "Without Blinking" has a track that Bob and Neil co-wrote, "Rats

in the Flats" - there is also a song on the album dedicated to Bob called "Midnight Bob".

Bob is currently producing a new library album for release next year and his own songs.

As if this wasn't enough, he can be found playing blues and Latin tunes in and around Soho, to include 'Jackson & Morgan' at Ain't

Nothing But, the blues bar on Kingly Street.

During the summer he played with Colombian harpist Diego Laverde Rochas on a Sunday afternoon at Violet's Bar on Berwick Street, and will hopefully return again before too long - a good way to spend a lazy Sunday afternoon. Details of some of this is on Violet's Bar Facebook page.

Amongst non-musical activities is hang gliding - he says he can't quite manage that now...!

After we'd met over several coffees, I got the following message: "Oh - forgot I'd jammed with Amy Winehouse at Jazz After Dark, Greek Street, as well as Joe Strummer at Glastonbury, and also The 6th Ave Hallowe'en Parade in NY city."

Jane Doyle



TWENTY YEARS IN SOHO

KAI LUTTERODT

As I write this article in the early morning of Thursday 23rd November, it occurs to me that this date marks my 20th year living in Soho. I was in my late teens in 2003 when I moved to Greek Street, followed by a short stint in Drury Lane, Covent Garden, before settling back in Soho. To have my whole adult life shaped through my experience of living and working in Soho is quite a privilege. I don't take it for granted - in fact, I wear the honour with pride - 'The Soho Girl'. My characteristics, particularly around tolerance, acceptance, and resilience are all from living and working in Soho.

Early memories

My earliest memories of Soho date back to childhood. My dad was a music journalist back in the day, and I fondly remember him bringing home signed autographs. I also remember accompanying him to underground bars and record stores in Soho during the late 90s. It was also at this time that my love for Chinese culture was sparked with visits to Chinatown, which led to me picking up books like "Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China" and eventually a visit to Beijing in 1999 with Dad. This trip played a significant role in shaping my love for travel writing.

My early years living in Soho included Berwick Street market. Handy Andy's was the equivalent to the budget stores I'd find in the more diverse residential areas I grew up around, such as Camberwell and Harlesden. It was at Andy's that I got all my home essentials for the flat I still live in - 18 years ago. I most likely went in for a dustpan and brush, and walked out with everything else but the kitchen sink!



Starting My Soho Times

You can live somewhere, but it's not until you actively engage and immerse yourself, that you're actually part of that community. The turning point for me was four years ago when I decided to start a print publication, My Soho Times. Prior to that, I'd been

dabbling in travel journalism, shortly after graduating from university with a BA Hons in Journalism. However, that plan soon fizzled out in my third year

when I was diagnosed as being dyslexic. On one hand, a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders, and on the other hand, the damage to my confidence had already been done. The thought of applying to work for a company scared me to the core - and still does, so I knew being my own boss would have to be my sole option.

It takes a lot of guts to set up a free publication alone, with little funds, and even less support at the time. However, with bundles of determination, I've managed to publish 10 editions, with the 11th out in January. Some highlights have been the Autumn 2020 'Take Away Issue' featuring stories of resilience

during lockdown, and the Autumn 2021 cover which featured all senior models of colour. I'm also super excited about the launch of our new Annual Catalogue magazine which will be released in January 2024, with the wonderful George Skeggs on the front cover to mark his 80th birthday.



The people I've met

I've met the most amazing people and equally some of the most outrageous characters during my time in Soho. However, my neighbours first and foremost are those I have to thank for the wholesome experience I've had since young adulthood to now: namely artist and former model Rebecca Taylor who now has a fab travel blog 'Old Bird Travels', and Beverly Elie who I view as a community champion standing up for the marginalised, particularly those with disabilities.

Other people I've been inspired by in Soho include Clare Lynch during her time at Soho Society and the late, great Leslie Hardcastle, with whom I found an interesting connection; we both have Croydon to Soho ties. Tony Shrimplin of the Museum of Soho, Tony Phillips aka Tony the Soho Tailor whose studio has been a refuge, and I've heard some amazing stories of his service in Soho over 50 years. Sadly he's packing up from the Berwick Street studio. Let's hope we can keep him in Soho. Continuing on, Mark Powell did the honours of being the My Soho Times first issue cover



star; Bev Elliot aka The Punk Queen of

Soho, dynamic lads that make up 'The Soho Flanners' (you'll see them outside Bar Italia, or My Place!), and tattoo artist Darryl Gates.

I've also been lucky enough to collaborate with amazing Soho-based creatives such as Ari Gurdon-Lindley, and most recently for my anniversary shoot, Danny Woodstock. Angela Fealy is a gifted filmmaker who also celebrates a milestone 10th anniversary of living in Soho. You'll probably find us at Trisha's celebrating, and dragging Neil Harrison along (he'd get 'Best Barman of the Year'



award from me if I gave them out!).

Then of course, there is artist and style icon George Skeggs whom I recently had lunch with at Poppie's where he shared stories of arriving at Piccadilly in 1957 on the number 6 bus and making his way into Soho where he stumbled across the 2i's Cafe "That was it!" he exclaimed, "I was hooked! I've been here ever since".

I'd like to see more support from the local council and local businesses collaborating with Soho Creatives. This is something I'm very passionate about, and where possible I use my platform to shout about those that do.

I've met so many people in Soho over the 20 years, some nice, some not so. My biggest take away is that Not everyone is going to like you, and that's OK. Like Usher says on a hit R'n'B "Just dust your shoulders off and don't care what no-one says about you"!

What's next for My Soho Times?

We've finalised our new annual catalogue magazine which will have a listing of Lifestyle businesses across Soho and the West End. I've had to pivot my business plan from being 'hyper-local' to being 'Soho-centric' (unfortunately I didn't get enough support), so it's businesses or brands with an audience in Soho.

The 2024 annual catalogue magazine with Soho George as the cover star comes out in January/February. Keep an eye out on www.mysohotimes.co.uk for updates and pre-order. Follow my Soho journey on IG [@the_soho_girl](https://www.instagram.com/the_soho_girl)

A VERY CIVIL CRUSADE

DAVID GLEESON

On 07 July I flew off to San Francisco with mixed feelings. My husband is American, so we regularly visit friends and family in the US. But two things had interrupted our trips: covid and Trump. The former brought the planet to a halt for a couple of years, and the latter was personal choice: we were in New York when he was elected President in 2016, and found him so distasteful that we started looking for other holiday destinations. Ever since that election, the slow-motion car-crash of current US politics has fascinated and horrified us in much the same way as, say, feeding time at the reptile house. Trump's antics since being voted out of office, his looming legal problems and the mysterious hold he still has over the Republican Party meant we flew into California intrigued, but apprehensive. Not that we expected any confrontations, mind you - all the people we were planning to stay with wouldn't be seen dead in a MAGA hat.

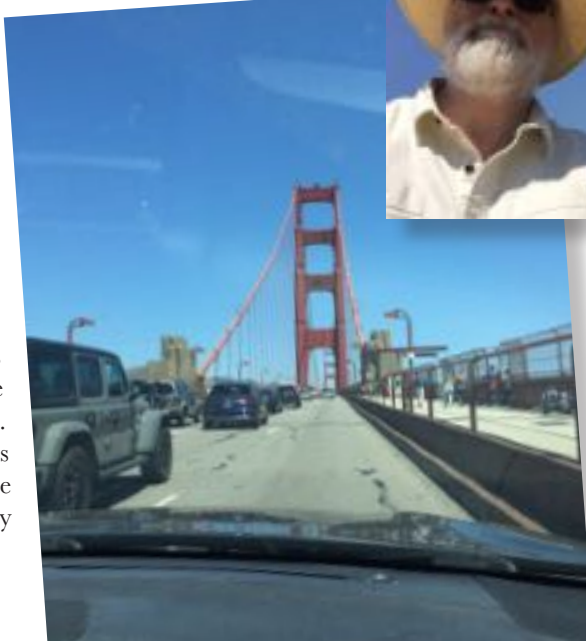
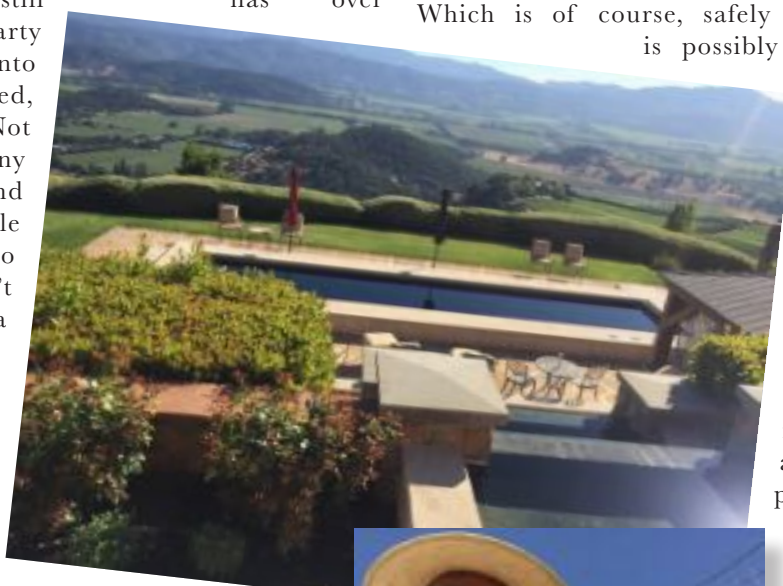
Any wariness at what awaited us disappeared completely as we were met and driven to our friends' home in central San Francisco. We were happy to be there, and California being the Land of Plenty that it is meant their fruit bowls were filled with the most delicious-looking peaches I had seen since our last visit. I mention this as peaches taste more splendidly

peachy to me in California than anywhere else. So I spent a few days making obscenely delicious peach margaritas for everyone. San Francisco has changed over recent years, with hippy culture supplanted by affluent dot-com yuppiedom, but our hosts still roll a joint after dinner (thank god) and it remains a beautiful city. After more travelling around the state - Napa Valley, Santa Cruz and Modesto, we caught an overnight flight to Ohio. Ohio is certainly different to California - the fruit isn't so sensationally tasty, for a start; and whereas California is safe Democrat territory, Ohio slips from red to blue. A few short, sunny days were spent with family and feasting on Mexican food before the next flight to Boston.

Which is of course, safely Democratic. Boston is possibly the most 'historic' city in the US in that it still feels like the seat of the American Revolution. On previous visits I have encountered re-enactments of battles between redcoats and 'rebels' (where, ironically, the rebels are paid actors as the organisers prefer eighteenth-century British army uniforms!) and seen the graves of grand American patriots like Paul Revere. Beacon Hill is the quietly grand residential area and, like in San Francisco, you'll have to search very hard to find anyone with a good

word to say about Trump.

We took the train up to Portland, Maine, for a few quiet days with friends by the sea, and then back to AmTrak for New York. Staying in a friend's apartment on the thirtieth floor in mid-Manhattan, New York was the usual perfect mix of



relaxing and stimulating. The 'City that Never Sleeps' is a surprisingly pleasant place to unwind, feeling more European than anywhere else, and more friendly than visitors dare to imagine.

After departing Penn Station - in the shadow of Madison Square Gardens - a leisurely six-hour train ride south took us to our last stop: five days with old friends in Lynchburg, Virginia. It is impossible to go anywhere in the south without being reminded of the Civil War, which soon uncovers unpalatable truths about slavery or the young age of many of the Civil War dead. Lynchburg is built on hills, with a downtown that looks semi-deserted, and is a city of surprising contrasts. Whilst something like 75% of mid-nineteenth century Lynchburg homes owned or rented slaves, a few decades later saw black culture firmly established in the city. Pierce Street was the home of poet Anne Spencer (1882-1975), whose house was a destination visited by figures like W.E. Dubois, Paul Robeson, Booker T. Washington, Langston Hughes and Martin Luther King, and is now preserved by her daughter. Lynchburg is currently home to Liberty University, a thriving, proudly Christian institute founded by the late Jerry Falwell, which disapproves of its students attending Lynchburg's theatres. Go figure.

Our friends drove us to Appomattox the day before we left. It was here in April 1865 that Generals Ulysses Grant and Robert E. Lee met and agreed the terms of the Confederate surrender and the end of the Civil War. Just a few houses, a shop, and a small jail mark the site of what was possibly the most civil end of any conflict in history. It is very hard to believe that the next year or two in the USA will be anything like as easy.



FILM, FASHION AND ALL THINGS... FESTIVE!

BY ANGELA FEALY

@FEALYFILMS

As a Soho resident and a Soho filmmaker, film and fashion are so closely linked and every day in Soho captures the film gaze at any given moment. Everyone who walks the streets of Soho has the potential to be framed in their own mini movie. The style, the icons, the individuality and the unique creatives make for an inevitable hobby of sitting by the window or perched outside a cafe with your favourite drink and people watching. Even the Soho dogs have their own fashion status, just as creative as their owners.

Film in Soho has a long history dating back almost 100 years. Piccadilly (1929) Dir E.A. DuPont, based on desire and murder, set in a Soho nightclub, featuring the dominant performance of Shosho, played by Anna May Wong, a scullery maid turned dancing star. Most notable of late, Last Night In Soho (2021) Dir E Wright, as per many Soho based films, focusing on a leading lady in distress. In this case Eloise, played by Thomasin McKenzie, an aspiring fashion designer, can somehow enter a world of mystery and horror of the 1960's Soho. Here she meets Sandie, played by Anya Taylor-Joy and we are brought on a neon filled journey through the many streets of Soho. Both films are on a long list of Soho films not to be missed.

Festive Films, Home Alone, Elf, Bad Santa or Die Hard (yes, it is a Christmas film!), we all have a festive favourite! It's hard to escape the festive films coming our way this December and Soho is in for a festive film treat thanks to All Is Joy hosting an advent calendar... with 12 days of Christmas films. When the doors open to their Soho cinema, it's pot luck what festive film will be screening. As you can imagine, all the festive classics are on the list so keep an eye out on their website for the first screening of the film advent calendar and I will see you there!

Fashion in Soho deserves a whole article to itself but let's start with what fashion means to Soho. Right from the

rise of Soho, tailors have been the foundation of fashion on the cobbles. We are so lucky to still have some of the iconic Soho tailors today - the brilliant Tony The Tailor, Mark Powell and Adrian Barrows to name a few, all with fabulous bespoke tailoring services. There are very few

streets to find without a fashion front. With Soho, although the fashion can be avant-garde, sex positive, retro, fast fashion, pop up, charity shops, sporting goods and so much more, let's delve into one of my favourite fashion houses in Soho - "David's Road" on D'Arbly Street - a feast for the eyes just on the window display alone, well worth putting in the steps to have a look at their store front. It's like the front row at Paris fashion week, redefining trends and challenging expectations. Step in store and be amazed by the passion and creative explosion of design. A unique all black design commands attention with the extravagance and stand out accessories. If you are looking for fashion with personality, elegance and playfulness, look no further. Challenging fast fashion trends, David's Road is a shopping experience everyone should treat themselves to.

Festive Fashion, the most fun time to be had with fashion is Christmas. Sparkle, sequence, sexy, feathers, tailoring, ball gowns, festive print and of course the classic Christmas jumper. Every Soho store will have something for everyone, but don't forget you can upcycle last year's Christmas

jumper... add Christmas decorations, the tinsel, the baubles, the lights. Now is the time to be creative with fashion and So High Soho on Peter Street is the place to go for all things festive and fun.

Happy festive season and all the best wishes for 2024!

ALL IS JOY



THEATRES, MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

FROM LONDON LIVING LARGE

THE CREDIT SUISSE EXHIBITION: FRANS HALS

★★★★★

The National Gallery | Until January 21, 2024

Sat - Thu: 10 am - 4:45 pm, Fri: 10 am - 7:45 pm



One looks at Frans Hals' portraits and immediately begins to speculate about the sitter's character. In his picture Jasper Schade (1645) looks sensitive, but a bit on the arrogant side. In another work, the anonymous young woman (c. 1658) appears sweet, but not too practical. In an instant, we feel we know these people, and we recognise them as kindred spirits. Even when the poses are formal, the artist ensures that the personality shines through. This extraordinary exhibition, which is next scheduled to move to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, has borrowings from most major holders of Hals' work and includes, perhaps his best known piece, *The Laughing Cavalier* (1624), which has not left The Wallace Collection since it opened in 1900. Divided into six galleries: Early Work, Portraiture into Art, Invented Characters, Family Ties, Up Close and Late Work, the show provides an unparalleled look at the work of a painter who was admired by artists as diverse as Whistler and Van Gogh. While Frans Hals' brushwork and his apparent forgoing of the use of preliminary drawings might be impressive, ultimately it is his ability to reflect the complexity and diversity of humanity that makes his work so compelling. Whether it is the imperious posture of *Cunera van Baersdorp* (1625) or the playful picture of *Willem van Heythuysen* (c. 1638) precariously tilting back in his chair, Hals brings his sitters to life in an unforgettable fashion. This exhibition is not only a delightful insight into the people portrayed, but also into the character of a sublime artist who embraces his love of humanity and conveys it in a manner that is simply masterful.

Reviewed by Jim Cooke

Image: Frans Hals, *Family Group in a Landscape* (c. 1645-8)

© Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

IMPRESSIONISTS ON PAPER: DEGAS TO TOULOUSE-LAUTREC

Royal Academy of Arts | Until March 10, 2024

We all know their paintings, but the drawings, pastels, watercolours, temperas and gouaches also reveal their artistry.

DEAR ENGLAND

★★★★★

Prince Edward Theatre | Until January 13, 2024

Mon - Sat: 7 pm, Thu & Sat: 2 pm



You don't have to be a football fan, or indeed, have any knowledge of the sport or its history to appreciate James Graham's insightful new play. While the framework of the narrative might be how Gareth Southgate becomes the manager of the England team and brings a new approach to its quest for success, the themes are universal. Ostensibly, the story is about how Southgate takes a collection of individuals and egos and turns them into a unified team which can deal with both success and failure. However, his reframing of their goals and commitment becomes an engaging commentary that transcends the beautiful game and explores the challenges that we all face in life. Failure, fear of not meeting expectations and a sense of isolation are universal experiences. The play also offers a fascinating parallel with the current political situation. Having lost its imperial self-conception and great power status, England's inability to cope and play as a team member with either its fellow home nations or its European counterparts is wryly exposed. As the diffident, but determined, Southgate, Joseph Fiennes does a first-rate job. He has the mannerisms down pat, but he also brings an inner conviction to the performance that is quite mesmerising. Fiennes is well supported by an extremely strong cast, and we particularly liked Will Close's Harry Kane and Gunnar Cauthery's Gary Lineker. Director, Rupert Goold, does a simply splendid job of pacing the show, and it provides all the adrenalin rush of a real match, while Es Devlin has created a wonderfully versatile and evocative set that situates us both in the locker room and on the pitch. Putting aside all the hackneyed quotes comparing sports and life, *Dear England* is a terrific production that has a great deal to say about both.

Reviewed by Jim Cooke

Photo by Marc Brenner

THE TIME TRAVELLER'S WIFE: THE MUSICAL

Apollo Theatre | Until March 30, 2024

Time has always been love's challenge, but not like this! Audrey Niffenegger's cult novel comes to the stage as a musical.

For more reviews and ratings visit:

www.londonlivinglarge.com | Twitter: @LondonLivingUK

THE DEVONSHIRE

JOEL TAYLOR

Nestling on a corner site in Soho, dwarfed by nearby architectural behemoths and just a few yards from Eros and the lights, is the Devonshire. It's a deceptive place. From the outside, it looks somewhat bijou but, entering through the front doors right on the corner, it opens like a pair of arms offering a warm embrace.

The Devonshire, just open a handful of weeks now, is a pub done well. There is no music, just a hum of quiet chatter. A familiar, patterned, carpet covers much of the bar, bare floor the rest. There are slightly askew fabric wall lights. Much of it feels like a knowing nod to Greek Street's Coach & Horses - a longtime favourite of the landlord Oisin Rogers. But there are smarter touches; three leather-bound banquette snugs are hidden behind the bar. And deeper, is another room, with woodcuts of other pubs and photographs of a Soho that has already played host to live music events.

A great fuss has been made over the Guinness here and for good reason. They have created two wooden shelves specially for the semi-poured black stuff to settle. Irish barman Sam, who until last year worked at John Kehoes, which boasts of serving the best Guinness in Dublin, is a natural behind the bar; friendly, nothing-too-much-trouble and swiftly learning the names of regulars-in-training.

One of the Guinness shelves says 'Soho since 1793' but the site has been poorly used in recent years. The old version of the pub closed in 2012, then became a Jamie's Italian and, more recently, something called Coqbull, a chicken and burger joint that, despite its terribly clever name, had its origins in Ireland, though I'm not sure who to blame for their Jammie Dodger cocktail!

Rogers, perhaps the most renowned landlord in London having previously been at the Guinea Grill in Mayfair and the Ship in Wandsworth with Youngs, has teamed up with Charlie Carroll

- founder of Flat Iron and the main funder of this project. The pair have also brought in Ashley Palmer-Watts, formerly of Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck.

Thus, above the pub, there are two floors of dining rooms, one featuring a large wood fired oven adjacent to ember-fired grills. In the corner is a huge pile of firewood; on the windowsill an axe is embedded in a chopped log.



Unsurprisingly, the food is superb and the menu classical - less Heston, more Fergus perhaps. Scallops with bacon and malt vinegar, potted shrimps with Melba toast and Iberico pork ribs - the last piled on a plate surrounding a still smoking ember from the fire - are among the starters. Mains include various cuts of steak - fillet, ribeye or on the bone - Iberico pork chop and a beef cheek and Guinness suet pudding. There is also a 'Pile of Langoustine', the sort of uncomplicated dish that was once presented to travellers dropping in at Les Routiers pitstops in coastal France.

The Devonshire is a place of rebirth and a welcome counterbalance to the usual gloom surrounding the fate of pubs. A report in October, from the real estate group Altus, found that 383 pubs closed in the first six months of this year - 46 of which

were in London. That compares with 386 pubs closing in the whole of 2022.

Obviously, not many pubs have the financial clout to compete with what the new iteration of the Devonshire is doing; the food is aiming at the high end of the market and while the prices are fair for such excellent produce, some may find them a bit steep - though I should point out good value bar snacks are planned!

Pubcos and wannabe landlords could do little better than to visit The Devonshire - or other terrifically managed pubs like it to see how it is done properly.

A VISIT TO MANZI'S

PHILIP ANTSCHERL

If you base your choice of restaurants on the words of a critic, you generally come away feeling, best case short changed, worst case hungry. How can you possibly retain a perspective when you are paid to gorge yourself three times a day on expenses? Those feted star critics churn out column after column oohing and aahing over the latest enfant terrible of the 'Cheffing' world, or cooing over some foam submerged mystery or floret of something or other.

Frankly, its a lot of old chuff, with little thought for what actual people want to know. Is it edible, affordable, does it have atmosphere, will you feel content when you leave, etc, etc? Readers of the Clarion can rest assured that, with sod all expenses on offer, what you get are the raw facts.

So, without further ado and with less bitterness towards the real critics who actually get paid, and have expenses accounts, to Manzi's. To skip the history and rebirth of this once legendary fish restaurant would be doing it a disservice. Established in the later 1920's just behind Leicester Square, it fast became a fixture on the Soho circuit and was filled to the gunnels with the cream of the glitterati. By the turn of the century it was a sad husk of its former self, finally shutting its doors in 2006. At least, that's what the God of restaurants probably thought - enough of this fishiness. But like Lazarus, it has re-emerged like a phoenix from the ashes in all its nautical glory in Bateman Buildings, between Greek and Frith Streets.

When you enter the new premises on Bateman Buildings, just past La Capannina Gentleman's Club, you are entering a world best described by Grace Dent of the Guardian as "Liberace levels of camp", a cruise ship, a nautical world of your pre-adolescent fantasies, or possibly Jacques Cousteau on acid. Gods, marlin, mermaids, stuffed fish, scallop shells, crabs and an awful lot of rope.

The food is surprisingly good given the optical distractions. As to what we ate, it was tasty and well presented and enough. We started with prawn cocktail, then my wife had fish and chips, complete with mushy peas, whilst I had the Arbroath Souffle Suisse, and to follow we both had Arctic Roll. You could also have a Knickerbocker Glory if the mood took you! Service was outstanding and the bill, even though not the cheapest, wasn't ridiculous. Welcome back, and I look forward to my next visit.

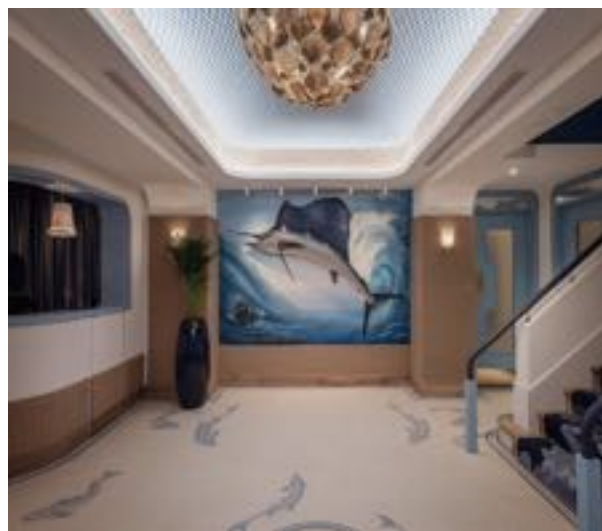
In addition, they have a Prix-Fixe menu Monday to Saturday until 6.30 pm and Sundays to 4.30 pm, which offers two courses for £19.50 and three courses for £24.50.

Manzi's of Soho

1-8 Bateman Buildings, London W1D 3EN

020 3540 4546

www.manzis.co.uk reservations@manzis.co.uk



THESE DELICIOUS THINGS

Published by Harper Collins, £25

These delicious things is a new cookery book which is a compilation of “Memories and recipes in support of Magic Breakfast”, a charity “whose aim is to end hunger as a barrier to education in UK schools through the provision of healthy breakfasts to children living with food insecurity”. It’s well known that children learn better when they have a good breakfast as well as making them happier and of course healthier.

The idea was conceived by the authors Jane Hodson and Lucas Hollweg over a kitchen table early in 2020, and gathered pace during lockdown, which is when Clerkenwell Boy came into the picture.

The result is this book, to raise funds for Magic Breakfast. The book contains signature dishes from many chefs and is full of memories as to what inspired them. It’s divided up into Good Mornings, Nibbly Bits, Little Lunches, Big Suppers, Sweet things, with a chapter on Grown up Drinks.

As the Clarion is Soho based, I start with Soho chef, Neil Borthwick of the French House, who gives a recipe for Rabbit à la Juliette. Neil’s mother was a French teacher and his family bought a house in the Vendée region of France, and that was the inspiration for the recipe, which he remembers eating washed down with the local wine, cooked by their neighbour, Juliette.

Another Soho entry is from Jeremy Lee of Quo Vadis, who remembers not having school lunches but going to his grandmother’s house in Dundee. He remembers simple dishes such as ‘mince and tatties with dumplings’, but his chosen recipe is his grandmother’s lentil soup, ‘warming and filling on cold days’, a dish not to be made in a hurry, requiring up to five hours simmering time!

The late Alastair Little’s mother’s recipe for Cock-a-Leekie is also included. Alastair remembered this being served as a soup in his childhood (being the only way his mother could persuade his father to eat chicken) only discovering later that it was a meal in its own right and should incorporate prunes! He discovered this when reading a book by Jane Grigson.

There is soured herring from Mark Hix, now at the Groucho Club, who grew up in Dorset, and remembers going to the harbour, and being fascinated by the fishing boats.

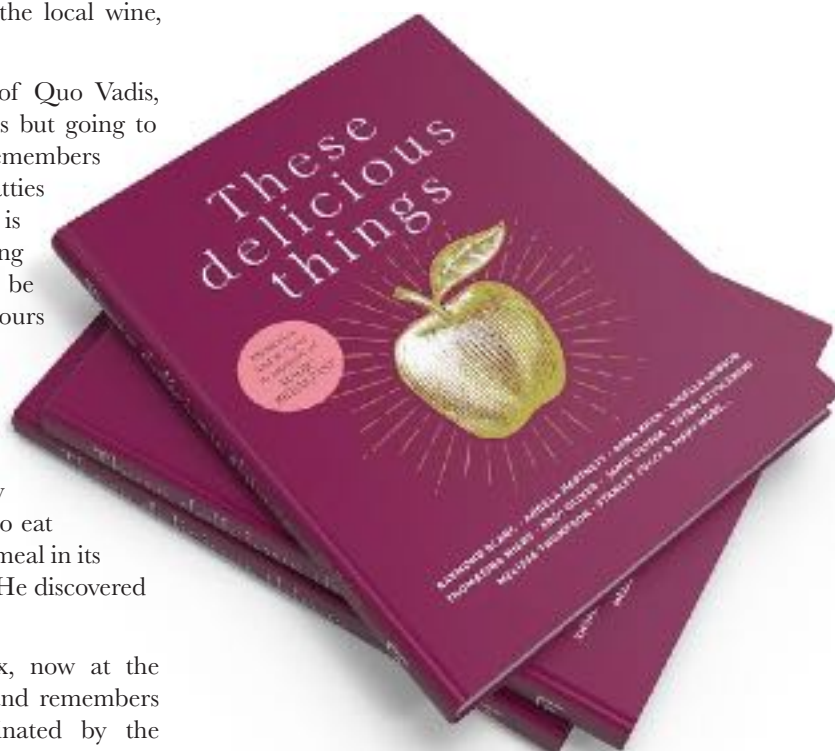
Fergus Henderson of St John fame gives a recipe for Iles Flottantes, a dish he discovered when he was in Paris

aged 13 with a friend, Ben, and Ben’s stepmother, Ruth Rogers (of River Café fame), when they were on a dessert discovery. He first made the dish following a recipe from a Caroline Conran book.

That’s just a taster from different sections of the book. Other recipes include Jamie Oliver’s “Proper porridge”, Nigella Lawson’s mother’s “Praised chicken”, which she claims as her family’s “culinary fingerprint”. Ken Hom is there, as is Yotam Ottolenghi. Angela Hartnett remembers cooking with her grandmother, making spinach and ricotta tortelli. Simon Hopkinson remembers rice pudding from the age of four.

There are so many delicious recipes combined with food memories. It’s a book for dipping in and out of, with lots of photographs. It would make a great Christmas present, at the same time supporting a worthwhile charity as 100 per cent of the publisher’s profits go to the Magic Breakfast.

Jane Doyle



CHRISTMAS BREAKFAST PASTRIES



Christmas breakfast in my house usually comprises some eggs – scrambled with smoked salmon, perhaps – and a glass of champagne. But these little pies – made with smoked haddock in a cheese sauce, encased in pastry – are just as luxurious. And the bonus is that much of the preparation can be done the day before.

Use bought frozen puff pastry, the type that comes in a sheet. And try and get good Finnan haddock: properly smoked fish are pale in colour, not lurid yellow (which comes from colouring).

Serves 4

1 packet frozen puff pastry, in a sheet (300-400g)

600g good smoked haddock

600ml milk

a sprig of parsley

a few black peppercorns

1 bay leaf

For the cheese sauce

50g butter

40g plain flour, plus extra for dusting

80g Cheddar cheese, finely grated

Preheat the oven to 230°C/Gas 8.

Remove the puff pastry from its packaging, and place on your lightly floured work surface. Cut into four equal pieces. Transfer these pieces to a suitably sized baking sheet, and prick the pastry all over with the tines of a fork. Put the tray in the oven for about 15 minutes. If the pastry looks as if it is getting too brown, cover with foil. Remove

from the oven when cooked, and leave to cool for a while. Cut the shapes in half horizontally, and remove and discard any greasy uncooked layers. These pastry layers – four tops and four bottoms – could be made the night before. Leave to cool completely, and store carefully for the next day.

The haddock and its sauce can also be prepared the day before. Cut the haddock into large pieces, and put in a large saucepan. Cover with the milk, and add the parsley, peppercorns and bay. Bring slowly to the boil and cook gently for about 15 minutes. Pour the fishy milk through a sieve into a small saucepan, and discard the flavourings. When cool enough, flake the fish into a bowl, and remove and discard all skin and bones.

To start the cheese sauce, melt the butter in a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Stir in the flour and beat well until smooth. Start adding the fishy milk, stirring well between each addition, to get rid of any lumps. (Add more plain milk if the fishy one runs out.) When the sauce is the right consistency, stir in and melt the cheese. When the sauce is cool, fold in the flaked haddock. Put the filling in a ovenproof bowl, cover with foil, and keep in the fridge overnight.

On Christmas morning, about 20 minutes before you want to eat your breakfast, preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas 4. Put the fish filling bowl, still covered with foil, into the oven, and heat through for 20 minutes. Put the pastry shapes on to a baking sheet and warm through in the same oven, but only for about 5 minutes.

Place a quarter of the fish filling on each pastry base, and top with the pastry tops. Serve immediately – and enjoy!

Susan Fleming

INTRODUCING MARTHA PENNEL

CURATE TO ST ANNE'S



In my late teens and early twenties, visiting the pubs, bars and shops and venues of Soho, I never imagined that one day I would be walking these very same streets wearing clericals and speaking on Soho Radio! As I write, it has now been five months since I arrived in St. Anne's as Soho's curate and the Chaplain at the House of St. Barnabas and I am absolutely loving it.

condensed form - giving me a fantastic chance to be thrown right into the life of the Church and the community here in Soho. Spending time getting to know people of all walks and stages of life, journeying through the highs and lows, building community is really important to me, as I can see that it is for others I have met here. Not least with Fr Simon, who is just wonderful (and extremely patient answering the many questions I have). If you see me do come and say hi!

I was born and brought up in Harrow, north-west London. Surrounded by a curious combination of tradition and unconventionality - having been brought up regularly going to a Baptist church as a family, as well as having a father who is a rock and roll guitarist; I have seen that played out in all areas of my life - faith, community involvement and in my personal relationships. Having studied Theology at King's College London, after a brief spell as Bill Ashton, then Director of NYJO's, personal assistant, I then returned to theology becoming a Religious Studies teacher. Teaching at a range of high schools in London, I taught Religion, Philosophy and Ethics. Thinking beyond what we just see in front of us, or asking Big Questions about life and faith exactly because of what is in front of us. I have always loved chatting about these things and journeying with others as they do the same; in my last career that was in the classroom, but it has always gone beyond just being a job - discussions out and about (or down the local pub), in a church environment, and with friends old or new.



I am married to Rob, a gifted musician who, as well as gigging (mainly jazz and rock), works as a peripatetic music teacher, mainly drums, but also guitar and bass. You will spot Rob, as he looks like an extra from the film Braveheart, although the only time he has worn a kilt was for our wedding 17 years ago. We live in Acton, with our two lovely children, Josephine, aged 8, and Reuben, who is nearly 7.

Joining the community here in July, after my ordination, was a great time to start, with the patronal festival at St. Annes and the Soho Village Fete as I was able to experience all the vibrancy, care, creativity and community spirit that day to day (night to night!) flows through the streets of Soho but in a

THE RECTOR WRITES



I'm writing this whilst feeling like I'm in the last stages of pregnancy. It's not an inappropriate feeling for a priest at Christmas, when celebrating the birth of Christ approaches. Though my biggest fear is that the volume of mince pies I am sometimes 'obliged' to eat means that I could shortly look like I actually am pregnant!

Here at St Anne's, it's not a baby on the way, but the result of a project that, under the leadership of Jake, our Operations Manager, has been many months in the making... approaching nine months, incidentally! On 15 January we'll open the doors to our brand new community coffee shop in a part of our building that was formerly occupied by Centrepont, the youth homelessness charity.

Increasing the church's presence on Dean Street, it will offer a convivial place of meeting and gathering for individuals and groups alike, and become a hub for sharing Soho news. At the time of writing this article we have yet to agree a name for this venture - though working with members of a steering group made up of Church and Soho Society members, together with Archer Street creatives, Wonderhood Studios, we have already discounted 'Stan's Café' (as in 'St Anne's Café') and 'The Confessional'.... both of which we thought were fun, but wrong!

Now you might be thinking that Soho needs another coffee shop as much as it needs another shop selling skateboarders' hoodies. What's going to be distinctive about our shop, and how will it benefit this community - the residents and businesses?

Operating seven days a week the coffee shop will serve customers who want to take-away or eat-in. However, of an evening the seating part of the coffee shop will close in order to be hired for events and meetings Monday to Thursday (St Anne's Community Hall and Allen Room being fully booked on these nights); and available later in the week specifically for community events...be it a quiz night, a board games night, a poetry reading, a music night, a talk on the LGBT+ history of Soho - the possibilities are endless.

Additionally, our coffee shop will uniquely offer a small 'quiet garden' at the back, and the facility of a small counselling room, perfect for 1-2-1 meetings, councillors' drop-ins, meetings with a member of the

council, housing team or police.

Here you will find news from The Soho Society, The Westminster LGBT+ Forum, Soho Neighbourhood

Forum and of course St Anne's itself, all in a place whose aim is to serve people, not just coffee. We hope to establish a regular time that parents gather here, having dropped off their children at school, and on occasion you might find among the delicious treats on offer cakes made by the children of Soho Parish School.



Serving a range of locally baked cakes, along with sweet and savoury pastries, breakfast pots and snacks, there will be speciality coffees and teas, but also 'affordable beverages' to make this a place to which all are able to come. Our monthly Tuesday Tea, usually held in St Anne's Hall, will move into the coffee shop and so for an hour and half you will be able to get a brew completely free! Aware of the pressure on residents by so many food and beverage venues being concentrated in Soho, ours will not be licensed and will operate only within core hours.

This is an exciting new venture, and as we enter our third trimester with the arrival of the super fancy (and eye watering expensive) coffee machine, some beautiful furnishings, and an ever-growing Christmas list of things we need, the reality of opening is beginning to dawn.

Like any expectant first-time-parents we hope that we will give birth to something which will be beautiful, a source of delight, and something to be proud of.

We'd like 'whatever it'll be called' to become a force for good in a troubled and divided world. There's that old African proverb that says it takes a village to raise a child, and a coffee shop at St Anne's will ultimately be what our village of Soho raises it to be. We hope it will be representative of our community, and also for our community - a place of welcome, even sanctuary, in Soho. Which mightn't have been a bad name, if it didn't sound like a health spa.

I wish you and yours a very happy Christmas and we look forward to serving you in the coming year. Merry Christmas, everyone!

Fr Simon



Bistro 1

**Taking bookings for Christmas Parties
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Relaxed and friendly Mediterranean restaurant
on two floors with coloured glass lamps,
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Menus: bistro1.co.uk
Christmas menu will be available

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020 7734 6204

St. Moritz

SWISS RESTAURANT

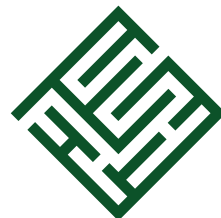
OPENING HOURS

Monday to Friday
12 noon to 3pm
6pm - 10pm

Saturday & Sunday
6pm to 11.30pm

161 Wardour Street, London W1F 8WJ
Tel 020 7734 3324
www.stmoritz-restaurant.co.uk

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AND A PLACE TO TAKE YOUR CLOTHES OFF.**

**ENQUIRIES:
contact@allisjoy.studio +44 (0) 20 3921 0985**

**75 DEAN ST, SOHO, W1
www.allisjoysoho.com**

